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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE: MARINE CORPS TRAINING AND ADVISORY GROUP: AN INNOVATIVE
EXAMPLE OF THE MARINE CORPS' EFFORT TO REBALANCE THE FORCE

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 07-08

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Approved: 17 April 2008

Date: _____

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 2008		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group: An Innovative Example of the Marine Corps' Effort to Rebalance the Force				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 34	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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Preface

During my assignment, as an Inspector-Instructor, with 25th Marines, 4th Marine Division, Marine Forces Reserve, I deployed to Iraq as a Military Transition Team (MTT) to the 3rd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army (IA) Division. My tour began in May, 2005 initially serving at the Brigade level. It was during this assignment that I met my eventual counterpart, Lieutenant Colonel Ali. In November, I was reassigned to 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, as the Senior Advisor to Lieutenant Colonel Ali. We accomplished some great things before I departed in February, 2006. We had a mutual respect for each other. His advice to me and the coalition significantly facilitated the mission of transition to the IA and Iraqi Security Forces.

My positive experience as an advisor was not without challenge. I witnessed how effective an individual can be if he has certain characteristics. Marines, like my Operations Advisor, Major Kevin Charter, had all the characteristics necessary to be truly effective as an advisor. Kevin- thanks for your professionalism, leadership, and friendship especially when the times were most difficult.

I chose to write on this subject because I believe that the task of advising is growing in importance, complexity, and frequency. Unfortunately there is no test for who will effectively perform as an advisor. The training and manning of teams, if deliberately done, can be managed from within the structure of the unit tasked with this mission.

I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Craig Swanson (LtCol- USMC Ret), who also served as our conference group civilian faculty advisor. His guidance assisted me in attaining the requirements of Command and Staff College. Even more importantly, he expanded the conference group's scope of learning by creating a conducive environment which allowed us to thrive.

Executive Summary

Title: MARINE CORPS TRAINING AND ADVISORY GROUP: AN INNOVATIVE EXAMPLE OF THE MARINE CORPS' EFFORT TO REBALANCE THE FORCE

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Thesis: Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group (MCTAG) is an appropriate and a key element to the Marine Corps' strategy in the "Long War" against extremists; the success of MCTAG is dependent on placing individual Marines in advisor teams with certain characteristics, due to the increase in frequency, complexity, and importance of the advisor mission.

Discussion: MCTAG is an example of how the Marine Corps will remain relevant and structured to fight the Global War On Terror. General James Conway, Commandant, United States Marine Corps, believes that "this war will place demands on the Marines that significantly differ from those of the recent past. Paramount among these demands will be the requirement for Marines to train and mentor the security forces of partner nations in a manner that empowers their governments to secure their own countries." The Department of Defense tasked the services to give stability operations priority comparable to combat operations. The creation of MCTAG is just one example of this adjustment to how the Marines will fight and operate in a broader continuum of operations, which now includes activities in all levels of war.

Conclusion: MCTAG is an appropriate response to the challenges that the Marine Corps faces in the "Long War." MCTAG will operate in all five phases of military operations. By utilizing MCTAG's advisor teams, the Marine Corps will engage a host nation early in order to first develop a lasting relationship or capability to confront the perceived problem. The effectiveness of MCTAG will ultimately depend on building and training teams that have the characteristics necessary to effectively advise foreign militaries.

INTRODUCTION

Helping others to help themselves is critical to winning the long war. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006*¹

Today the United States is engaged in a long war “with terrorist organizations that pose a threat to its [United States] security and that of other societies that cherish the principles of self-government.”² The challenges associated with this struggle are grand. In this war, past wars, and future wars, the Marine Corps will use military advisors to develop host nation forces as well as long lasting partnerships with this country’s allies. Brigadier General Daniel Bolger, former commander of Coalition Military Assistance and Training Team (CMATT), Iraq, believes that “in the present war, victory depends on the contributions of the local forces. Given the damaged societies and fractured militaries in both Iraq and Afghanistan, it takes a lot of dedicated work to raise and sustain competent, loyal armed forces. Small teams of advisors make this happen.”³

Additionally the U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency manual lists numerous tasks that need to be accomplished to be successful in a counterinsurgency operation. According to the manual, “key to all these tasks is developing an effective host-nation security force.”⁴ Furthermore, Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl states, “Indeed, it has been argued that foreign forces cannot defeat an insurgency; the best they can hope for is to create the conditions that will enable local forces to win for them.”⁵ One of the Marine Corps’ responses to this perceived requirement was the creation of the Marine Corps Training and Assistance Group (MCTAG). MCTAG is an appropriate and a key element to the Marine Corps’ strategy in the “Long War” against extremists; the success of MCTAG is dependent on placing individual Marines in advisor teams with certain characteristics, due to the increase in frequency, complexity and importance of the advisor mission.

Traditionally, Special Operations Forces (SOF) handled the advisory role. Due to the current commitment of SOF and the growing requirement for advisors, this task is too large for SOF to handle the mission exclusively. The role of advising is now frequently assigned to conventional military. SOF's mission will not be encroached on because the need for advisors, in a high risk situation; to personnel or political, is still prevalent. SOF will still be called upon due to their unique training, manning, and experience. In order to earn one of prestigious titles (i.e., Seal, Special Forces, Ranger) within SOF, there is a rigid selection and assessment processes as well as a significant amount of training that occurs before assignment to a team. Additionally, these units deliberately assign members to a team, train, deploy and remain a team after the mission is done. Historically conventional forces, when tasked to provide advisory teams, build teams with Marines from separate units, conduct pre-deployment training, deploy, and then disband. The team members, once disbanded, often return to their parent unit.

However, Nagl proposes that a permanent United States Army Advisor Corps of 20,000 soldiers be created in order to support the current and future role of advising.⁶ On the other hand, Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli (USA), argued against the creation of a dedicated advisor corps. He believes that; "we [the military] simply don't have the resources to divide the military into 'combat' and 'stability' organizations." "Instead we must focus on developing full-spectrum capabilities across all organizations in the armed forces."⁷

The Marine Corps agrees with the importance of advising but proposes a different solution. The Marine Corps Commandant, General James Conway, believes that "although we will continue to develop our full spectrum capabilities, this war will place demands on our Marines that differ significantly from those of the recent past. Paramount among these demands

will be the requirement for Marines to train and mentor the security forces of partner nations in a manner that empowers their governments to secure their own countries.”⁸ Additionally, the Commandant feels that the Corps needs to “rebalance” the force. An example of this change occurred in September -2007, when the Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group (MCTAG) was established. MCTAG was created in concert with *The Long War: A Marine Corps Operational Employment Concept To Meet An Uncertain Security Environment*” which was published by Headquarters Marine Corps, Plans Policies and Operations (PP&O), and with the *Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment*). MCTAG will “provide conventional training and advisor teams to support Host Nation Security Forces (HNSF) or to general purpose forces partnering with HNSF in order to develop and build partner nation capacity in support of civil and military operations.”⁹

The decision to create MCTAG has roots in the Department of Defense Directive; Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR), written in November, 2005. This directive states that stability operations “be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DoD activities including doctrine, organizations [similar to MCTAG] training, education, exercises, material, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning.”¹⁰ In concert with the Marine Corps’ growth to 202,000 (i.e. 202k plus-up) Marines, the effort to reorganize and break away from the traditional structure is underway. MCTAG is just one example of the “innovations” that will better affect the “resolute and clever” enemy of today and tomorrow.¹¹

Prior to the creation of MCTAG, and the two previously listed concepts, Michele Flornoy and Tammy Schultz voiced a valid concern.

Meeting the full spectrum of future challenges will require growth in U.S. ground forces. More importantly, it will require substantial change in U.S. ground forces' orientation, training, and mix of capabilities to be better prepared to deal with the demands of irregular operations. Expansion provides an invaluable opportunity to pursue innovative approaches to enhancing U.S. capabilities for the future, such as establishing an Army Corps of Advisors and Military Advisory and Assistance Groups.¹²

Both the Army and the Marine Corps should revisit their growth plans and put more resources toward innovative solutions that will dramatically increase their ability to be effective across the full range of future operations, especially irregular operations and building the capacities of partner nations to provide for their own security in the future.¹³

Since the two newly formed Marine Corps documents, which describe concepts related to the Long War, Flournoy and Schultz' criticism is no longer valid but rather their criticism has been answered. Within the Long War Concept, "the focus is the establishment of a global, persistent forward presence tailored to build partnership capacity for security, while adapting existing forces and creating new capabilities for an uncertain future."¹⁴ The concept carefully handles what some see as competing interests by stating that the Marine Corps also needs to "remain a force in readiness and maintain the ability to decisively engage armed opponents."¹⁵ Maintaining the ability to decisively engage in a kinetic fight becomes problematic when the military is directed to give stability operations "priority comparable to combat operations."¹⁶

MARINE CORPS TRAINING AND ADVISORY GROUP

MCTAG is the future of the Marine Corps' effort to deliberately face the advisor mission and the challenges associated with it. MCTAG was commissioned by the Commandant in September, 2007, and will incrementally grow in structure and capability until it is Fully Operationally Capable (FOC) in 2011. MCTAG's planned structure is 147 Marine and Navy officers and 600 enlisted Marines and sailors, which is a relatively small price to pay for the capability that MCTAG provides. In theory, the structure of MCTAG was sourced by

restructuring (disbanding) of some traditional forces that were deemed less important to the Marine Corps. Once FOC, MCTAG will organize, train, and resource advisor teams that will operate independently or augment general purpose forces. MCTAG will not only provide forces, but also provide expertise on the subject of advising to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, HQMC, and joint audiences. The commander of MCTAG published his intent:

MCTAG will provide an enduring institutional capacity that demonstrates the U.S. Marine Corps' commitment to global defense and security cooperation missions through provisioning of properly manned, trained, and equipped conventional military and advisory teams in order to promote partnering with foreign and coalition nations and to build partner capacity in consonance with strategic and defense security cooperation and engagement plans.¹⁷

The MCTAG concept and mission is well nested in both the *Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment* and the *Marine Corps Operational Employment Concept to Meet an Uncertain Security Environment*. Both of these documents dictate that MCTAG will provide regionally focused and trained advisory teams to the Geographic Combatant Commanders and the Commandant. The MCTAG teams will operate as independent teams, potentially during all five phases of military operations, from shaping the environment to enabling civil authority. The advisor teams can also augment traditional Marine Corps units, while they operate as a Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force (SC MAGTF). In this concept, advisor teams will no longer be manned by elements, stripped from the deployed unit, but rather from MCTAG.

MCTAG will capture the extensive advisor experience, from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF), and apply that experience to the Long War. Without a formal organization of advisors, the advisor experience and lessons learned from OIF/OEF will be lost. As previously stated, prior to the creation of MCTAG, advisor teams were

created, mostly out of hide, and once the mission was complete, disbanded and returned to their parent units. MCTAG is a means of capturing and preserving the experience and capability that has been created since the advisory efforts begun in OEF / OIF. Marine assigned to MCTAG will be part of a team, prior to a requirement for a specific mission, and will remain a team once they are called upon. When members of the team require a garrison assignment, they will become a member of the staff and provide leadership and training to the remaining teams as they go through their training cycle.

MCTAG will be able to influence places where there are constrained footprints or access is minimal because of its small size and independent nature. Additionally the advisor teams will have the capacity to act as an economy of force while representing all the warfighting functions. MCTAG will customize each advisor team based on the environment and culture they are assigned as well as the needs of the commander. The premise is that each team member, regardless of the mission, will receive "core skill" training, then additional training for any skill, unique to the mission during the 120 day pre-deployment period. During this period, teams will form and bond as specific skills are honed. At the completion of the training period, the Team Leader will have a team that influences; either indirectly or through its host nation counterpart.

During the training and forming period, the team chief or Officer in Charge (OIC) should have the latitude to select and later assign positions and responsibility based on each advisor's capabilities. There is no replacement for sound judgment of the leader. Dr. Thomas Affourtit, who is a psychologist and management consultant, wrote about selecting, preparing, and evaluating advisors assigned overseas. Although his findings are fascinating, there is no battery of tests that can predict effectiveness of a military advisor. Unlike the Vietnam military

advisors, the advisor teams that MCTAG builds will operate as a unit, not one or two advisors embedded in a foreign unit. Many of the characteristics identified in his study are relevant (see Appendix A) to the situation we see today.

Forming and maintaining the mission of MCTAG has some obvious challenges. Manning conventional advisor teams, after multiple previous deployments, is just one. Therefore, the question remains: Who will be drawn to MCTAG, vice Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC), which also has an advisor mission? MCTAG addresses this challenge by realizing that the manning of an advisor team is not based on a precise Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) but rather an occupational field. Although the development of MCTAG is during a growth period for the Marine Corps, the positions, due to senior nature of the requirement, equate to a significant amount of experience. Thus, the standard MCTAG advisory team will consist of fifteen members; one field grade officer, two company grade officers, ten staff non-commissioned officers, and two non-commissioned officers.

Some of the organization's benefits are stated above, but probably the most significant is the deliberate nature that advisors will be organized, trained, and resourced. Since the teams will have a regional focus and receive specific training, the ad-hoc nature of building, training, and deploying advisors becomes antiquated. Lieutenant Colonel Tom Gratton, Deputy Director MCTAG, does not think special screening should be conducted for potential advisors but rather allowing the team leader, flexibility to assign each member specific responsibilities based on the individual's strengths and weaknesses. Multiple documents from the Marine Corps Lessons Learned support this theory as well as my personal experience as an advisor.

The 25th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division was assigned an advisor mission in Iraq in January 2005. The regimental headquarters was to form the 1st Iraqi Army Division, Military Transition Team (MTT) as well as many brigade and battalion MTTs within the division. The regimental Commander had three months to plan and build teams, with Marines who were predominately organic to the regiment. He and his staff considered many factors as they built teams of Marines, which deployed in three waves. The composition of teams and responsibilities within the team continued to be manipulated as personalities and characteristics were further observed as the MTTs received formal training and conducted practical application of those skills. Looking back, the modification to the composition of the MTT members, proved to enhance significantly the performance of each team. Although this was as deliberate as possible in the short time available, MCTAG would far exceed this level. With a lengthier building and training phase (i.e., 120 days) Marines will be observed and to some degree tested, with a focus on performance in practical application, similar to what they will experience in theatre.

Regardless of the technique used to build teams, there are certain characteristics that are required in order to be effective as an advisor. Due to the increased importance and range of skills the advisor must have, advisor teams will have a more challenging mission than what we see in OIF / OEF. Potentially, after individuals are assigned to MCTAG, Marines will be assigned to teams and specific positions based on the characteristics, that the key leaders observe, and are described later in this paper.

ROLE OF ADVISORS

The role of a military advisor includes much more than how they are currently being used in OIF / OEF. According to the Special Forces Foreign Internal Defense Operations publication:

A basic premise of U.S. foreign policy is that the security of the United States and its fundamental values and institutions will be best preserved and enhanced as part of a community of free and independent nations. In this regard, the United States endeavors to encourage other countries to do their part in the preservation of this freedom and independence. The objective is to support U.S. interests by means of a common effort. This common effort makes use of instruments of national power to support a Host Nation (HN).¹⁸

During stability operations, the military is usually in a support role, to Other Government Agencies (OGA), Non-Government Organizations (NGO), and contractors; however the military often is the first U.S. representative, to initiate the application of national power, especially in a hostile situation. The Marine Corps has a similar perspective on the utilization of the military and advisors. The Marine Corps believes the military must "have an expanded role in supporting the diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and nation building activities that will reduce our adversaries' existing and potential bases of support."¹⁹ According to Lieutenant General Chiarelli, "today, the military is the only national organization able to conduct some of the most critical tasks associated with rebuilding war-torn or failed nations."²⁰ The military, in the frequent absence of another organization, to take the lead, therefore becomes an instrument of diplomatic, informational, economic and military means. The advisor in many cases is in a place where he can best influence and collect information from the populace. He accomplishes this in three ways:

☐ *Indirect support. Indirect support builds strong national infrastructures through economic and military capabilities that contribute to self-sufficiency. This can include unit exchange programs,*

personnel exchange programs (PEPs), individual exchange programs, and combination programs.

☐ *Direct support. In direct support, U.S. forces provide direct assistance to the Host Nation civilian populace or military. This support can be evaluation, training, limited information exchange, and equipment support.*

☐ *Combat operations. Combat operations are a temporary solution until HN forces can stabilize the situation and provide security for the populace. Emphasis should be placed on HN forces in the forefront during these operations to maintain HN legitimacy with the population. Combat operations can include COIN operations.*²¹

In order for the military advisor to cast a wide net, he must consider "military civic action programs, tactical operations, intelligence, and population and resource control operations."²²

Military civic action programs are most dependent on communication and influence through a counterpart. A goal of this program is to legitimize the efforts of individuals the advisor

supports. Maintaining any accomplishments, through persistent contact, is critical before the mission is truly successful. During tactical operations, the advisor must focus his counterpart's efforts on the enemy and assist in prioritizing his efforts. Through the application of deliberate planning the counterpart will ensure his priorities are supported and mission success is likely.

During intelligence operations the advisor must take advantage of the counterpart's unique ability and familiarity with the local people to analyze collected information. Again, effective communication is required between the advisor, who provides intelligence up the chain of command after collecting and assessing intelligence. Concurrently, his counterpart also receives and shares intelligence. The last means is population and resources control operations, which may include initiation of martial law and use of psychological operations (PSYOPS), to break control from the enemy while establishing friendly control. Resources are expended to create good will and establish a situation where the necessities are provided or available to the local

population. This may require development of an economic situation where there is opportunity to earn money and purchase goods.²³

The Marine Corps has a similar view and includes “combat operations, training and advising host nation security forces, essential services, promotion of governance, economic development and information operations” during the campaign design phase.²⁴ The advisor will be a key element in each of these events and therefore needs to be able to communicate and advise his counterpart as each unfolds. Additionally, the advisor will influence his counterpart and his nation from the strategic level down to the tactical level.

According to the Long War Concept, advisors “will establish enduring relationships that facilitate the interaction between the Security Cooperation Marine Ground Task Force (SC MAGTF) and partner government agencies and security forces with whom they will be working.”²⁵ Additionally, the advisor teams will act in a “supporting” manner to the SC MAGTF during both Civil Military Operations and Security Cooperation, while they are “supported” during the Security Assistance phase. When the Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group are not deployed they will provide training to the SC MAGTF. Finally, the concept includes continuity of Marine forces. Advisor teams will conduct their Relief In Place (RIP) with follow on advisor teams while the SC MAGTF is in the middle of their rotational cycle. Conversely the SC MAGTF will RIP in the middle of the advisor tour.

The Marine Corps may be assigned prolonged operations, which are “any operation of sufficient scope, scale, or duration to demand significant change in an organization’s normal personnel policies, training, or equipment.”²⁶ Prolonged operations should be expected while conducting stability, security, transition, and reconstruction missions. Advisors may act as

economy of force in such commitments. Additionally, advisors can provide a form of persistent contact and legitimacy to the newly formed host nation government and military.

CHARACTERISTICS

*"Not everyone can be an [effective] advisor – some don't have the temperament or personality for it."*²⁷

Identifying the characteristics and qualities necessary for an advisor is a difficult and subjective task. Taking a historical perspective provides a solid foundation upon which to build. The advisory effort in Vietnam and more recently in OIF/OEF provides plenty of lessons learned, regarding the characteristics required of a military advisor. The context of this analysis is based on the conclusion that the task of advising will again utilize conventional forces, on an even larger scale, and under more complex situations than is currently seen in OIF / OEF. Advisors in the future will be forced to operate in environments that provide less coalition structure and support than we currently experience in OEF / OIF due to the well established bases and logistical assets.

Additionally, the tasks associated with being a future advisor are broader and require application of all the elements of national power. In order to fully appreciate the problem faced by the military, planners must expand their view of campaign design. According to Marine Corps Concept, "we also have an expanded role in supporting the diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and nation building activities that will reduce adversaries' existing and potential bases of support, especially in failed or failing states."²⁸ The advisor must be able to apply critical thinking to each "role" assigned. The military must also view both the problem and the solution more holistically. In many cases, the military advisor, through interaction with his

counterpart, and the local population can provide insight to the problem the military faces. The insight is provided, not only from an American perspective but also the host nation counterpart. Through proper analysis of the problem, preemptive and reinforcement measures can target the exact cause of the insurgency.²⁹

PATIENCE:

The number one virtue is **patience**. *"Nothing happens as fast as we would like or to the degree we would like."*³⁰

Advising will always have a few constants. It will always include a foreign and American military member, on a foreign land, and in a variety of degrees of remoteness. The challenges associated with this require patience on the part of the advisor and his chain of command. For example, foreign counterparts, who operate in a different culture, often operate from different perspectives, such as their perspective on time. The American advisor must always take this into consideration and apply a degree of patience. According to Grunow, patience is "most critical."³¹ Furthermore, counterparts will not always select the most efficient means of accomplishing a task; potentially they will look for a 'sustainable and effective' solution in their mind.³² After the decision is made, it is the advisors job to support it and concurrently look to what requires his advice next.

Americans by nature look for immediate results. This perspective is not always shared by, nor accomplishable by foreign militaries. Since American military personnel are representatives of U.S society as a whole, it is likely that they will go abroad holding this, and other values as what they perceive to be right. Furthermore, they will strive to achieve these values and will, to varying degrees, feel that they are failing when these strivings are frustrated.

³³ Concurrently, the advisor cannot be judged on the expectation of rapid results.

During Vietnam, advisors in one Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) reported that the most important changes advisors seek, on average, take between six and nine months to accomplish. "Progress toward effecting the changes advisors seek is, on average, retarded by about three months. Most obstacles are ascribed to the counterparts; the largest single category consists of differences concerning values, motives, and attitudes."³⁴ The advisor must take into account the solution which is first accomplishable, but also sustainable, by the host nation. At the same time, the advisor needs to realize that, "in fact, situations that include a security vacuum or very active insurgency often require starting programs as soon as possible."³⁵ In the COVAN study, by Dr. Thomas Affourtit, which examined advisors characteristics from the Vietnam War, patience was the third most recognized advisor characteristic.³⁶

The advisor cannot become discouraged when his advice is not acted on. The goal of advising is building the capability of the counterpart and perhaps he is utilizing good judgment when he does not listen. "All advice will not be accepted. Some will be implemented later."³⁷

PROFICIENCY:

*They have to be professionals and they have to have the skills that make them appear to their counterparts as credible, valuable soldiers. They have to bring something to the table in terms of professional skills and linkage to capabilities that the host nation doesn't already have, whether that's fire support, medical evacuation or whatever it may be.*³⁸

According to a RAND Study, professional competence is the most important qualification for an advisor.³⁹ The advisor must not only be able to provide advice, but operate proficiently in combat. Brigadier General Bolger emphasizes that "everybody fights" while conducting the military advisor mission, during a kinetic phase. The advisor must be an expert with weapons and communications. He believes that, most importantly, "everybody fights"

reinforces the basic tie between leaders and led. In this example, Brigadier General Bolger refers to the fine line of what is advising and what is leading. There are times when the advisor must lead and he must be proficient in his warfighting skills, whether it is engaging the enemy with indirect or direct fires, calling in medevacs, conducting command/control, or liaison with adjacent coalition units.

In Iraq, as the Iraqi Army becomes more capable and responsible for battlespace, the advisor must provide accurate and effective guidance on how to accomplish the increasingly more sophisticated missions assigned. Initially, the advisor was tasked with getting an Iraqi Army unit "operational." Now the task of advising is more sophisticated. Advisors today find themselves coordinating fires, executing complex combined missions, and multiple lines of operations, including Civil Affairs. This trend will continue and the advisor is the advocate for applying all the elements of national power.

Various compilations of after action reports from OIF emphasize the importance of being "branch qualified."⁴⁰ They need to be experts in their fields (MOS) and should have performed the duties at the level that they are advising and mentoring.⁴¹ According to the COIN pub, "more than anything else, professional knowledge and competence win the respect of counterparts and their troops."⁴²

ACCEPTANCE / EMPATHY (COMPASSION) OF CULTURE

Another constant for American advisors is their need to accommodate or adjust to the foreign culture that they operating. Advisors must not only accept the culture of their counterpart but they must understand it. Failures in working relationships between the advisor

and his counterpart arise frequently because one does not understand the premises and values which guide the other's decisions and actions.⁴³ Multiple sources emphasize the importance of the advisor living with, eating, and fighting in the culture that they advise. One of the most important cultural lessons learned from Vietnam is the capacity to possess cultural empathy toward your counterpart.⁴⁴ To have this, an advisor must possess the skill of intercultural communications.⁴⁵ Many former advisors were interviewed on advisory duty worldwide, and they responded that intercultural communications skill was the most important advisor quality.⁴⁶ To show empathy military members must not be "culturally fatigued" by too many overseas assignments.⁴⁷ Advisors must be adaptable to foreign culture⁴⁸ and make clear that they do not intend to undermine or change the local religion or traditions.⁴⁹ At the same time advisors are expected to "reduce (or report) the effects of dysfunctional social practices" that affect the mission.⁵⁰

Advisors who understand the host nation military culture understand that local politics have national effects. Effective advisors recognize and use cultural factors that support host nation commitment and teamwork. A good advisor uses the culture's positive aspects to get the best performance from each military member and leader.⁵¹ During Vietnam, advisors who did not realize that the "needs and desires" of locals were different from the Americans, led to wasteful CA [Civil Affairs] projects.⁵²

HIGH MORAL STANDARD

High moral standard was the fifth most mentioned characteristic in the Vietnam COVAN study. Advisors due to working in remote areas are often far from formal supervision and are therefore afforded a great deal of latitude in actions. Similar to those temptations on independent

duty, where we see top performers judgment lapse, advisors may too. Since nothing goes unnoted by counterparts, a lapse in moral standard will have significant adverse effects on the indigenous force's progress.

PERSONABLE

Multiple resources emphasize the importance of the relationship between advisor and counterpart. The successful advisor will spend a lot of time with their counterpart as they eat, sleep, and fight alongside of each other. The advisor must make this presence a positive experience both professionally but also on a social basis. All work, no play will be frowned upon by host nations where relationships are crucial to success.

In the COVAN study, characteristics such as being "open minded," "good sense of humor," and "open," which I consider all necessary in being personable, are listed. A significant goal of an advisor is to develop rapport with his counterpart. The SOF manual says that "rapport is a sympathetic relationship between people that is based on mutual trust, understanding, and respect." The need to establish rapport with HN counterparts is the result of a unique military position in which the advisor has no direct authority or control over their actions. Effective rapport must exist to gain the control needed to execute the mission. The successful advisor establishes rapport that allows influence over the counterpart's actions despite the absence of formal authority. Rapport is developed when each individual perceives the other as competent, mature, responsible, and compatible (working toward a common goal).⁵³ Major Meoni's thesis considers rapport the primary tool to mission success. "He cannot be very effective otherwise."⁵⁴ Some believe that sharing prior combat experience is necessary in developing rapport. I disagree

and believe that effectively fighting, for the first time, alongside your counterpart is even more important in developing this bond.⁵⁵

Advising is not a one way event, comprised of just telling the counterpart what to do. The advisor must be comfortable and ask the counterpart for his advice too. "The counterpart is the expert in his country and that he can learn much from him."⁵⁶ When the advisor convinces the counterpart he is open, he is also setting the example for the counterpart; emphasizing confidence, which then allows for a more open relationship.

VOLUNTEER:

When an advisor volunteers for this mission, an assumption can be made that he wants to serve in this capacity and that he understands the challenges associated. This characteristic is one of the easiest and most valuable to incorporate into an informal screening process.

In July 1967, General Johnson (USA), who was eager to increase the volunteer pool, created several different incentives. Additionally, his Chief of Staff personally invited qualified officers to the mission of advising. This method only saw a 35 percent acceptance rate by U. S. Army personnel and was soon abandoned. The perceived problem was that advising was not favorably looked at by promotion and command boards.⁵⁷ Now things are different. According to new a Marine Corps Order (ALMAR 046/07) promotion boards "should be especially diligent in weighing the qualifications of officers (SNCOs) serving in Transition Teams (TT) and joint Individual Augmentation (IA) billets. Service in these critical billets should weigh equal to traditional Marine Corps officer (SNCO) billets in the operational forces supporting the Global War on Terrorism during board deliberations."⁵⁸

It is important to get to the bottom of the reason why a person volunteers. In most cases they volunteer for the right reasons but there are occasions where this is not true. When a volunteer raises his hand, for the right reason, it shows true support of the mission. If an advisor does not truly believe in the mission, the challenges associated with advising will turn a less committed person into a cynic. True dedication to the mission will allow advisors to get over the unanticipated hurdles.

INITIATIVE:

According to the Marine Corps Leadership Traits, "initiative includes meeting new and unexpected situations with prompt action. It includes using resourcefulness to get something done without the normal material or methods being available to you."⁵⁹ A good example of this occurred when an ETT [advisor team for Afghanistan] leader, who felt his pre-deployment training was inadequate, on his own initiative, located a former ETT leader and arranged to have him talk to his team. He stated that provided the most effective training the team received.⁶⁰ A second example comes from the United States Army, Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) section. TT [Transition Team]. members must also have the ability to operate in an unstructured environment, often without direct guidance from higher.⁶¹ The environment in which advisors often operate, provides little access to resources. The advisor must be able to manage both human and material resources while determining what is mission essential. "Counterparts, while seldom short on ideas concerning what their needs are and plan with regard to their uses for resources, are almost always short with regard to the economic and technological resources required to enhance their security at the individual, organizational, and national levels."⁶² When facing this challenge, referring back to the mission (transitioning responsibility from the

coalition to the Iraqis), as a guide to what and how many resources should be provided. The decision to provide resources is not solely based on availability, rather a perceived need or factors which influences the mission.

Advisors who have initiative can provide insight to their counterpart on how to best utilize time and resources. If tactical tasks at hand are complete, what is the next mission? Is the down-time an opportunity to train? Is the time better spent on maintenance or rest? The advisor with initiative and a good grasp of culture will come up with an appropriate answer.

CONCLUSION

The Marine Corps' response, to the changing environment of the Long War, needs to be deliberate and efficient. MCTAG's creation, as the Marine Corps grows in strength, was appropriate and an example of how flexible the Corps is. The capability that MCTAG will offer is great and is well nested in the future concepts that the Marine Corps published. Additionally, MCTAG is a necessary element of the Marine Corps' larger transformation from the MAGTF to Security Cooperation MAGTF. MCTAG will also provide a single point for advisor issues. This will create an efficient means to deal with the ever changing role of the advisor. Teams will have a regional focus, receive unique training and offer the SC MAGTF a capability that it cannot effectively maintain. Due to its small size, MCTAG will also quickly react to unexpected situations and unique requirements of the Combatant Commanders.

MCTAG will effectively build teams, based on the unique capabilities that each advisor brings to the unit. Requiring potential advisors to be screened or tested before entering MCTAG would adversely affect the recruiting and staffing of the teams. MCTAG, through a deliberate

process, will build teams by assessing strengths, not focusing on any weakness. This will occur during the forming period, since teams are not built to only satisfy a single requirement. In other words, teams are built with a long term goal rather than just satisfying the short term goal of a single deployment. During the forming stages, team members should be observed and placed in teams ensuring that the previously discussed characteristics are spread throughout the team, not necessarily all members. One recommendation is that the Team OIC compares the characteristics; patience, proficiency, acceptance of foreign culture, morality, being personable, and initiative be emphasized and developed to whatever extent possible, during the build and train phase of their training. Through training, leadership, and a deliberate assignment to a team, MCTAG will offer a capability that has limitless utility. The teams can be used in all situations, from training, Phase 0 (engagement), advising in combat, and lastly provide a long term persistent presence.

Although the complexity of advising is growing, MCTAG will create and maintain teams that remain relevant through aggressive training and maintenance of the advisor skills that we are gaining in OIF / OEF. MCTAG facilitates the growth of mature advisors, capitalizing on real world experience. MCTAG will offer a long term commitment to advising and the engagement task, reducing the cases where combat operations are required.

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- ¹⁵ Ibid., p.5
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- ²³ Ibid., p. F-3
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- ²⁸ Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment, 4.
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- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p.154
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- ⁴⁸ Hickey, viii.
- ⁴⁹ USMC COIN, 6-13.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 6-13.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 6-17.
- ⁵² Hickey, xii.
- ⁵³ SOF FID manual, F-2.
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Appendix A

In December 1975, Dr. Tom Affourtit published "*Communion In Conflict: The Marine Advisor*." Dr. Affourtit is a retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel (USMCR) who served from 1954 to 1996. His service during the Vietnam War included a tour as an advisor and in a civilian capacity. After returning from Vietnam he published this piece, compiling data from 35 Marines who served as an advisor in 1972, during the Easter Invasion. One half of the participants were Majors, while 44% were Captains, and two were Lieutenant Colonels. During 1972, advisors were required to be volunteers and then selected, since the number of volunteers exceeded the requirement. The first significant factor was the number of volunteers in the sample. The survey included 88% volunteers and most had completed a second combat tour in Vietnam. Another significant factor was that the sample population came from the conventional forces, not Special Operations Forces (SOF). I think the sample reflects advisors who I assume were effective as advisors, or they recognized what was required to be effective. One of the ten questions the advisors were asked was: "What personal characteristics, abilities, or skills do you feel are most important for an advisor to possess?" The following list are the answers and percentage that were collected.

Professional / military competence	74% response
Cultural understanding, empathy	54%
Patience	51%
Language, communication skill	46%
Flexibility, adaptability	26%
Well adjusted, self confident, controlled	17%
Bravery, courage	17%
Physical condition / stamina	17%
Tact	14%
Integrity	11%
Independence	11%
Friendliness and interest in others	11%
Initiative, motivation	9% ⁶²

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